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INFORMATION PAPER

SUBJECT: Review of Biological Defense Research Program (BDRP)

1. History. The U.S. Army Medical Unit (USAMU) was established at Fort Detrick in 1956 to initiate studies in research and development of defensive biological warfare measures, and in 1958, the U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command (USAMRDC) was established. In 1969, the USAMU was re-named the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID). In 1972, the United States ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and On Their Destruction (the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention or BWC). Since 1972, the BDRP has grown in personnel and in fiscal resources due to a resurgence of interest in the program. This renewed emphasis was based on two main factors: 1) evidence that the U.S.S.R. continued to maintain an offensive BW capability and 2) the realization that modern methods of genetic engineering created the possibility of developing new agents or increasing production, virulence and stability of existing agents.

2. Charter and Mission of the BDRP. In accordance with terminology found in the BWC, the BDRP is confined to research on defined measures of defense against biological weapons. The BDRP is a completely unclassified program and has the support of Congress as manifested by their appropriations. The BDRP is executed by the USAMRDC and by the Army Materiel Command (AMC). The USAMRDC portion is focused on vaccines and drugs, personnel/patient decontamination, diagnosis, and casualty care; the AMC portion is involved with detection and identification, decontamination, and physical protection. The USAMRDC effort in developing strategies to counter biological threats emphasizes the pre-exposure period, with particular attention given to active immunization.

3. Current Organization. The BDRP is conducted by both in-house laboratories and extramural contractors. Most of the in-house work occurs at USAMRIID, which has a total staff of about 500 people (including a professional scientific staff of about 100) housed in two buildings containing approximately 300,000 square feet. The main building contains 23 laboratory suites, six of which are certified at Biosafety Level 4 (BL4). Facilities for studying aerosol-induced infections in

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experimental animals are used extensively to evaluate new candidate vaccines and drugs. Approximately 60% of the FY 90 budget for the BDRP was used to support in-house projects, while the remainder was used for the extramural program, funding over 150 separate contract efforts in universities, other government agencies, and in the private sector.

4. Relation to other infectious disease research in DOD. The USAMRDC is also the lead agency for the infectious disease program of the DOD, incorporating efforts conducted by the Navy and other services. The infectious disease program deals with naturally occurring disease threats, while the BDRP is concerned with defense against deliberate use of biological warfare agents. While some of the same technologies are used in both programs, e.g. to develop and evaluate vaccines, there is no duplication. There is a close collaboration within the scientific community, and the two programs are mutually supportive, particularly at the basic research levels.

5. Additional reference material available:

a. Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the Biological Defense Research Program, April 1989

b. Medical Technology Base Master Plan, March 1990

c. Medical Biological Defense Research Program, prepared for the Science and Technology Review, June 1990

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